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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002273

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [IZ](#) [UK](#)
SUBJECT: ACTION REQUEST: UK SEEKING OPTIONS TO RESUME NAVAL
TRAINING IN IRAQ

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Classified By: Pol-Mil Minister Counselor Cameron Munter for reasons 1.
4(b) and (d)

11. (U) This is an action request, see paragraph 8.

12. (C//NF) Summary: British officials in mid-August made multiple inquiries of Post and U.S. military in Iraq regarding options for resuming UK naval training in Iraq, highlighting the mission's uncertain future. The UK pulled its naval trainers back to Kuwait at the end of July after an agreement to continue the mission stalled in the Iraqi Council of Representatives (COR). British diplomats told EmbOffs on August 16 that London originally intended to keep those forces in Kuwait for only about a month while waiting for an agreement to be reached, after which HMG would need to withdraw them entirely from theater. The British Embassy recognizes that the COR has not officially rejected the draft agreement, nor has the political environment improved its prospects since the COR recessed in July. British officials have also raised the possibility of resuming naval training under NATO Training Mission-Iraq (NTM-I), acknowledging that NTM-I is already near the 300 personnel ceiling agreed to with the Government of Iraq (GOI). Post requests guidance on what message to deliver to the British Embassy regarding recommendations for its course of action.

UK Naval Training Faces Decision Point

13. (C//NF) British Embassy officials over the past week have inquired through military and Embassy channels about options for resuming UK naval training in Iraq. Until July, the UK supported the GOI with a mission comprised of up to 100 UK personnel training the Iraqi Navy at the Port of Umm Qasr, a naval ship and crew participating in NAVCENT operations to secure Iraqi oil platforms in the Persian Gulf, and staff officers embedded in Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I). These operations provided the UK with a continued strategic presence in the Middle East and a close partnership with the U.S. military, in addition to filling critical needs for Iraq's maritime security. The Iraqi Cabinet on June 2 approved a draft bilateral agreement covering the UK's naval training and oil platform security missions, but the agreement stalled in the COR due to repeated Sadrism walk-outs in July. Since the previous agreement covering UK operations in Iraq ended on July 31, the UK moved its forces to Kuwait in hopes that a new agreement would be subsequently reached.

14. (C//NF) British diplomats told EmbOffs on August 16 that HMG originally intended to keep the naval trainers in Kuwait

for only about one month-which would mean until the end of August. If an agreement facilitating the trainers' return to Iraq could not be reached with the GOI by then, HMG would withdraw them permanently from theater. If HMG and GOI arrived at an arrangement after September, HMG could send a different team of trainers, though at greater expense and effort. The British diplomats mentioned that the COR has not officially rejected the draft UK-GOI maritime support agreement and indicated that London still wonders whether a COR vote may be possible when the COR reconvenes on September 18. The Brits did not mention definite plans to lobby the COR for this purpose, however, and said that they don't perceive the political environment to have changed enough to make them Qthe political environment to have changed enough to make them hopeful.

Potential Options

15. (C//NF) The British diplomats inquired about Post's view toward the possibility of putting UK trainers under NATO Training Mission-Iraq (NTM-I), which British officials have also raised with U.S. military officials. All sides recognize it would be politically risky to seek an increase in NTM-I's manning above the 300-person cap in the recently signed NATO-Iraq long-term agreement, especially since that agreement has yet to be approved by the COR. NTM-I currently has approximately 260 personnel, leaving only 30-40 remaining spots, and NTM-I is exploring potential expansion in other mission sets as well. The British diplomats told EmbOffs that their bilateral naval training mission had included 50 trainers with the remaining personnel providing force protection, and suggested that if the U.S. military were willing to provide force protection, naval training might be possible under NTM-I with only 30 UK personnel.

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16. (C//NF) LTG Helmick, dual-hatted Commanding General of NTM-I and Multinational Security Transition Command-Iraq (MNSTC-I), separately informed DCMs Ford and Haslach on August 18 that British officials had raised with him an alternative possibility of bringing a few naval trainers back to Iraq under the British Chief of Mission. LTG Helmick responded to the British officials that he firmly disagreed, even if the move were carried out openly with the GOI, and Post agrees that such an option would be both politically and legally unacceptable. British diplomats told EmbOffs that their preferred course of action is to explore the NATO option and that they wish LTG Helmick to discuss the proposal with Iraqi Minister of Defense Abd al-Qadr Mohammed Jassim.

Comment

17. (C//NF) The British Embassy is seeking advice from the U.S. regarding their current options for resumed naval training in Iraq, due to its need to make a decision imminently about the future of their naval forces in Kuwait. They probably assess that if they cannot achieve a new arrangement by roughly the first week of September, they will need to permanently redeploy their forces from the region. Post assesses that the UK's only viable options are a COR-approved bilateral agreement or an expanded contribution to NTM-I. A COR vote on the UK agreement remains unlikely and drawing renewed attention to it could weaken the NATO long-term agreement by association, which is also still pending COR approval. NATO could seek to increase its personnel cap with the GOI, especially given the GOI's interest in NTM-I expansion into border security training, but the GOI might insist on a Cabinet decision and then COR approval for this increase. NTM-I may also be able to incorporate a reduced number of naval trainers at its current size but should base this decision on the GOI's priorities

for NTM-I.

18. (C//NF) Post seeks a common position from State and DOD and guidance as to what message to convey to the British Embassy regarding its options for resuming naval training in Iraq, specifically what course of action we recommend for the UK by early September. Post understands from LTG Helmick that U.S. naval trainers, to be led by a U.S. Admiral, have already been requested and approved to fill the gap in training the Iraqi Navy--to arrive in September or October--but that they would be redeployed if the UK were able to resume the mission with its own trainers. Post requests guidance as to:

1) whether we recommend that the UK actively pursue a COR vote on a bilateral agreement when the COR reconvenes this fall;

2) whether we see UK naval training under NTM-I as a feasible option, and whether and at what point we would recommend NATO request a personnel increase; and

3) whether the U.S. military would be willing and legally able to provide force protection at Umm Qasr in order to enable NTM-I to take over the naval training component with a reduced number of UK trainers, relieving the inbound U.S. trainers.

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